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## ARTICLE 3: Why Can't I Forgive Myself?

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If you're a Christian you've probably heard this before, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Well, in all honesty, sometimes our worst enemy can be ourselves! It's interesting in the beginning to note that we start out looking for resolution from the wrong others have done, but at some point a shift begins to take place. It's as if we are staring in the mirror seeing ourselves for the first time. Suddenly we realize that we are in need of forgiveness, too.

What happens next is called blocking the truth. We start to defend ourselves. Then we try to justify our actions and thoughts. Then we start to avoid the truth. We might say, "I never try to hurt anyone!" Even if I did, it would be unintentional." If we allow ourselves to block the truth about ourselves we will begin to create stress and anxiety which will destroy the peace we had found. What happens then? The process you worked for is thrown in reverse.

So there is bad news and good news about forgiveness. The good news is if we recognize the battle we're in is a legalistic mind set, we can then face our own need to be forgiven and overcome a major hurdle in our desire toward spiritual health. We need to grow in grace every day with forgiveness for ourselves so that we can follow Jesus and continue our journey still crossing the bridge as we gain maturity.

One reason it's so hard to forgive ourselves is that sometimes our own harmful words and actions don't even make sense to us! Apostle Paul said that he wanted to do good, but he couldn't. It all goes back to our sin nature which we will have a battle with as long as we live on earth. We wonder how can we say such hurtful things to the ones we love the most? It could be that we expect perfection even perfection from those closest to us. Could perfection be an enemy to your growth in maturity?

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Underneath our failure to forgive ourselves is shame. Shame can be devastating. It is a deep painful sense of discomfort. If we stare at it long enough we will see the reverse side of it is pride. Shame cries out for healing and it must be healed. Looking down deeper, we recognize that shame is wounded self-love. Think about this again. Shame causes resistance, even refusal to forgive ourselves. Prideful self-love comes into play which makes it hard to accept imperfections in ourselves. It's like wearing dark sun glasses and shielding yourself from the truth. You just can't be less than perfect. You won't have it! But you are not perfect, my friend, you are human!

We need to come to God and ask Him to help us discover the roots of our weakness. When we accept responsibility with Him we begin to gain the confidence He has for us and we will loosen the negative bondage that has held us for so long.

When you first start to forgive yourself, you may run into some hurdles like remorse, self-hatred and self-condemnation all of which seem huge and even impossible to overcome. You begin asking yourself how can I get over them? Did you know there is nothing impossible for God? He says in Jeremiah 32:7 *"Behold, I am the Lord, God of all flesh. Is there anything I cannot do?"*

My friend, there is nothing too hard for God. Do you know how much He wants you to climb over this bridge and be set free from yourself? Are you asking do you have the right to forgive yourself? You may be imposing upon yourself what you think your offender or other people think about you.

Your guilt may not be that big and I hope it isn't. But self-forgiveness can only begin when you realize that no matter how severe the offense, God will forgive you, if you seek to forgive yourself. After all, we are His creation and we are created in His image. He wants for us to love ourselves with His love.

Self-forgiveness really isn't an optional decision, it is vital because it lies at the heart of God's forgiveness. Ezekiel 18:21 says, *"Rid yourselves of all the offense you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit."*

The past can be a good teacher if we approach it as a good student from what we can gain from our mistakes. Philippians 3:13 puts our past and our future together when Apostle Paul says, "forgetting what is behind and working toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus", and take it as a command to never look back again at the past.

It is amazing how the power of prayer can bring peace over memories and traumatic experiences to a troubled soul. I have personally envisioned myself in Jesus' arms resting my head on His shoulder many times when my heart was broken. I allowed myself to go through this period but I knew I couldn't stay there. I had to move on.....

So, this is what I decided to do and what I want to encourage you to do. Begin a "prayer journal" with words from your own heart that might say, "Lord, I choose to become the person you intend for me to be. I want to find joy in my life. I want to imprint your name across my heart."

The first day write a brief account of how you feel about yourself. Do not analyze your thoughts. If feelings of shame rise up in your mind, or if you feel there are any inadequacies or fears, list them before God. Invite Him to speak to your heart. Be sure to write your thoughts and feelings every day and then go back at the end of each week and review your thoughts. Always ask Him for His divine wisdom. You will be amazed at what the Lord will show you. When you discover something new, be sure and write it down in your journal.

Make a commitment to be rooted in Christ and release yourself from your past. Confirm today that you desire to have your roots firmly established in Him, well covered, watered and nourished by His Holy Spirit. If He shows you any withering roots confess them to Him. Ask Him to perform a miracle of growth.

Be sure and re-read this article again if you feel a deep sense of shame for something you said or experienced in your life. Don't let shame that leads to pride rule your life. Come to Jesus with an open heart and let Him wash away all your guilt, all your shame and release yourself from your past. When you do, you will find the freedom you have longed to discover for so long...

#### **Let's pray:**

Dear heavenly Father, I have carried so much pain in my heart for so long that it has become a bitter, negative way of living. I don't want to live in the past. I want to live now, in this moment free to be me! Please help me release myself from guilt, even pride I have held on to for so long, and help me pull it all up from the roots and out of my life. I ask you to help me to forgive myself and for you to forgive me. I know that with You all things are possible. I trust You, Lord. Please forgive me of my sins.

In Jesus name I pray, AMEN